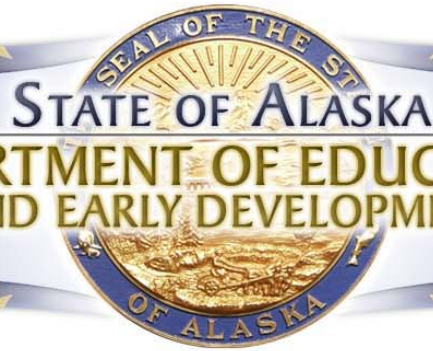


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Press Release

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MUSEUM EXHIBIT LOOKS AT SCIENCE THROUGH YUP'IK EYES

If you thought science was solely a product of European culture, think again. A new summer-long exhibition at the Alaska State Museum looks at the technology and scientific principles underlying Yup'ik Eskimo culture in Alaska. "Yuungnaqpiallerput (The Way We Genuinely Live): Masterworks of Yup'ik Science and Survival" explores the ways traditional Yup'ik culture developed tools and technology for living in the harsh sub-arctic environment of southwest Alaska.

The exhibition opens on Juneau Museum Day, May 16, and will run until October 17.

In "The Way We Genuinely Live," remarkable 19th- and early 20th-century tools, containers, weapons, watercraft and clothing illustrate the scientific principles and processes that have allowed the Yup'ik people to adapt to living in the sub-arctic tundra of the Bering Sea coast. Visitors get to explore examples of these principles through examples such as snowshoes and domed houses. Featuring masterworks ranging from a needle made from a crane wing bone to elegant bentwood hunting hats, the exhibition is a tribute to the intelligence and ingenuity of this ancient and ongoing culture and illustrates the intimate relationship between humans and their environment.

The exhibition is based on knowledge shared by Yup'ik elders and takes visitors through the seasonal cycle of activities. At interactive science stations, visitors can engage in hands-on activities that show how and why things work. Video and audio programs document traditional activities as well as the construction of traditional Yup'ik tools. Not just a science exhibit, "The Way We Genuinely Live" is compelling in its presentation of the unique marriage between art, science and ethnography. At the exhibition's core is the recognition that the Yup'ik way of life – both past and present – is grounded in deep spiritual values and scientific principles.

The 250 exhibition objects come from the collections of 13 museums in the U.S. and Germany. "The Way We Genuinely Live" is curated by cultural anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan, and is a joint project of the Anchorage Museum and the Calista Elders Council, a leading Native cultural organization in southwest Alaska. It was developed with the guidance of Yup'ik elders, scientists, and educators and with major support from the National Science Foundation. An extensive catalog for the exhibit has been published by the University of Washington Press and is available for purchase through the Friends of the Alaska State Museum Store.

Ann Fienup-Riordan, the exhibition curator, says in her introduction: "Yuungnaqpiallerput tells us something about Yup'ik tools and technology in the past. Much more important, it teaches about what it means to be Yup'ik today. It does so thanks to the talent and generosity of spirit of the many Yup'ik elders and educators who shared their knowledge. The exhibit began with their desire to bring things from museum collections home for young people to see, and this is what has made it strong.

Moving through the exhibit, you will read and hear the voices of elders who shared their knowledge. They did not do so for fame or fortune, but because of their love and compassion for us all, and their strong desire that their words help us all live better lives.”

The exhibition premiered in September 2007 at the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center and Museum in Bethel, Alaska, before traveling to the Anchorage Museum in 2008 and the Museum of the North at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, earlier this year. Following its showing in Juneau, the exhibition will travel to the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC.

The exhibition was designed by Presentation Design Group of Eugene, Oregon. Video and audio programs were produced by KYUK of Bethel, and the interactive science stations were developed by the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry with advice from Yup'ik elders, staff from Anchorage's Imaginarium Science Discovery Center and national experts in the field of informal science education. The organizers gratefully acknowledge the support of the National Science Foundation, Totem Ocean Trailer Express, Northern Air Cargo, Alaska Airlines, BP, ConocoPhillips Alaska, Calista Corporation, Anchorage Museum Foundation and the Anchorage Museum Association.

The opening of Yup'ik Science coincides with Juneau Museum Day and will include special activities for families and an outdoor reception from noon to 5:00 p.m.

Ann Fienup-Riordan, the guest curator of the exhibition, will offer a special preview talk at the Alaska State Museum on Monday, May 4 at 7 p.m. The public is invited to hear Ms. Fienup-Riordan speak about putting the show together, working with elders and youngsters from the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, and borrowing objects for the exhibit from over a dozen different American and European museums.

For more information, go to the exhibit web site at: <http://yupikscience.org/>

Summer hours at the museum are 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily except holidays. Admission is \$5. Visitors 18 and under are admitted free of charge. An annual pass that allows unlimited visits to the Alaska State Museum and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka is available for \$15. Assistance is available for visitors with special needs. Please contact Visitor Services at 465-2901 before the visit.

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